



Title	多文化社会と留学生交流 第24号 学术论文の英文要 目
Author(s)	
Citation	多文化社会と留学生交流 : 大阪大学国際教育交流セ ンター研究論集. 2020, 24, p. 43-43
Version Type	VoR
URL	https://doi.org/10.18910/79093
rights	
Note	

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Abstract

The perception of English Vowels by Korean Native Speakers Concerning the influence of speakers in comparing the recognition of the vowels

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The purpose of this study is to explore the perception of English vowels by Korean native speakers. It focuses on the varying perception difficulty for English vowels in relation to the sound environment. The sound environment is determined by differences in the manner of articulation of consonants following vowels. The experiment consists of 24 test words formed with six American English vowels (/i, ɪ, ε, æ, α, ʌ/) embedded in four different sound environments (/hVt/, /pVt/, /pVn/, /pVl/). The experiment compares two words paired with differing sound environments, examining judgment accuracy for each combination and the influence of sound environments. Twenty-two Korean native speakers in their 20s and 30s participated in the experiment. A previous study (Han and Nozawa 2017) found that participants could rarely differentiate /i/ and /ɪ/, and /ε/ and /æ/ in all sound environments. Moreover, judgment accuracy was found to be lower overall for /pVn/ and /pVl/ environments.

However, the results of this study did not agree entirely with previous studies with contrary findings for particular combinations of sounds. In addition to differences in specific vowels (/i, ɪ, ε, æ, α, ʌ/), factors such as speaker voice characteristics (speech rate, F0, and intensity) were found to influence recognition.